

Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

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FM AMEMBASSY COTONOU

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9751

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DEPT PLEASE PASS ALL OAU POSTS

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PORG, OAU, DM

SUBJ: BENIN SEEKS CHANGE OF VENUE FOR JULY OAU SUMMIT

1. FOLLOWING A DECISION TAKEN MAY 25 BY THE REVOLUTIONARY MILITARY GOVERNMENT THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF BENIN IS OFFICIALLY SEEKING A NEW VENUE FOR THE NEXT ORGANIZATION OF AFRICAN UNITY (OAU) SUMMIT SCHEDULED TO BE HELD IN LIBREVILLE. THE BASIS FOR THE KEREKOU GOVERNMENT'S DECISION IS GABONESE PRESIDENT BONGO'S ALLEGED PARTICIPATION IN THE JANUARY 16, 1977 MERCENARY ATTACK ON COTONOU. CITING DOCUMENTS WHICH WERE INCLUDED IN UNITED NATIONS FACT-FINDING MISSION'S FINAL REPORT, THE SEMI-OFFICIAL DAILY EHUZU MAY 30 PROCLAIMED, "THE BENINESE PEOPLE DENOUNCE THE PUPPET NATURE OF THE GABONESE STATE AND ITS CHIEF, THE SINISTER AL-HAJ OMAR ALBERT BERNARD BONGO." IN AN EDITORIAL THE SAME NEWSPAPER ACCUSES BONGO OF HAVING VIOLATED THE CHARTER OF THE OAU BY LETTING "FOREIGN PIRATES" USE GABONESE SOIL AS A BASE FOR ATTACKING ANOTHER AFRICAN COUNTRY. FOR THIS REASON THE BENINESE PEOPLE MUST CATEGORICALLY REJECT THE HOLDING OF THE NEXT SESSION OF THE OAU IN LIBREVILLE.

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2. TO UNDERLINE THE SERIOUSNESS OF ITS EFFORT TO CHANGE THE SITE OF THE OAU MEETING, PARTY MEMBERS ORGANIZED A MASS MARCH MAY 30. A GROUP OF SEVERAL THOUSAND BENINESE MARCHED THROUGH COTONOU SINGING REVOLUTIONARY SONGS, CHANTING ANTI-IMPERIALIST SLOGANS AND CARRYING PLACARDS DENOUNCING "THE TRAITOR OMAR BONGO" AS WELL AS KING HASAN OF MOROCCO. ONE PLACARD READ, "HASAN II -- OMAR BONGO, THE MILITARY BASES OF BEN GUERIR AND

FRANCEVILLE WILL BE YOUR TOMBS".

3. COMMENT: THE OAU SUMMIT MEETING IN LIBREVILLE PROVIDES A VERY GOOD MEANS OF RESUSCITATING THE "IGNOBLE AND COWARDLY" ATTACK OF JANUARY 16, 1977 AS A BASIS FOR THE KEREKOU GOVERNMENT'S MAINTAINING A STATE OF MILITARY EMERGENCY IN BENIN. UNTIL IT SEIZED UPON THE OAU VENUE, KEREKOU APPEARED TO BE RUNNING OUT OF MEANS OF EXPLOITING THE MERECNARY ATTACK WHICH A MAJORITY OF BENINESE HAVE BECOME TIRED OF HEARING BLARED AT THEM DAY AND NIGHT OVER THE "VOICE OF THE REVOLUTION". THE MARCH THROUGH COTONOU PROBABLY WAS ORGANIZED AS MUCH TO KEEP THE URBAN POPULATION BUSY ON WHAT HAS BEEN A TRADITIONAL RELIGIOUS HOLIDAY, PENTECOST. IN THIS MANNER THE GOVERNMENT WAS ABLE TO CHAMPION SIMULTANEOUSLY TWO OF ITS MAJOR THEMES: THE NEED TO FIGHT "IMPERIALISM" AND TO STAMP OUT THE "MYSTIFICATION" OF RELIGION.
THOMPSON

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